THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

MERCY CORPS

NO END IN SIGHT:
SYRIA'S REFUGEES AND REGIONAL REPERCUSSIONS

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. BRADLEY: Good morning everyone and thank you very much for joining us for today's discussion. My name is Megan Bradley and I'm a fellow here with the Foreign Policy program at Brookings. In particular, I work with the Brookings' LSE Project on Internal Displacement which works to promote the human rights and well-being of refugees and internally displace persons around the world. In particular we work to support the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons.

The co-director of the Brookings' LSE Project, Beth Ferris, had hoped to be here today to moderate today's discussion, but unfortunately due to a family emergency was unable to be with us. So it's a real pleasure for me to be able to step in to moderate such an excellent discussion.

As you all know we're approaching the third anniversary of the Syrian Civil War and of course, there's no end in sight to the humanitarian crisis that is facing the region. The current estimates from the UN are that there are 6.5 million Syrians displaced within their own country in addition to another 2.5 million refugees who fled to neighboring countries. In the past weeks alone we've seen massive new displacements from Aleppo of up to 500,000 people.

So today's event is focusing, in particular, on the regional dimensions of Syria's displacement crisis. We'll be looking at the effects of the crisis on the recourses, political dynamics, economics and social structures of the neighboring countries. But it's clear that the refugee crisis really can't be understood in isolation from the internal displacement crisis. So I'll look forward to exploring the interconnections between these issues with the panelists.

When I had the chance to meet with Syrian refugees in the region over the course of the summer I was, like many visitors to the region, really struck by the depth of hospitality in the neighboring countries. Jordan, for example, is now hosting some 600,000 Syrian refugees. To put this in context, this would be equivalent to the United States taking in more than 27 million refugees over the course of a three year period, and that's 26.7 million more than are in the United States at the moment.

So I think we really have a lot to learn from the neighboring countries and from their tradition of hospitality. Of course, the United States also has a critical role to play in responding to the crisis and supporting the host governments, which we'll also explore in today's discussion.

It's a real pleasure to be hosting this event in cooperation with Mercy Corps, one of the main NJOs involved in responding to the crisis in the region. So I'd like to that Mercy Corps for making today possible.

For those who are using Twitter, you can follow the conversation today using the hashtag #SyriaCrisis or by following at Brookings' IDP.

We have a full panel, and you have the speaker bios in front of you, so I'm not going to give long introductions. But just to give you a sense of the layout of today's event. We'll begin with Ambassador Chedid, Ambassador of Lebanon to the United States, who will address how the Syrian refugee crisis is affecting conditions in Lebanon.

We'll then turn to Ambassador Faily from Iraq, who will speak to the effects of the crisis in Iraq, which is, of course, facing its own displacement crisis. Third we'll hear from Dina Sabbah from Mercy Corps, who will be addressing the situation in Jordan, and in particular questions around water resources.

Fourth I'll turn to my colleague, Kemal Kirisci, who is Director of the Turkey Project here at Brookings, who will address the situation in Turkey based on some recent fieldwork that he's done there. Last, but certainly not least, we'll here from Kelly Clements, who's the Deputy Assistant Secretary with the Borough of Population, Refugees, and Migration at the State Department. Kelly will be speaking to the role of U.S. government policy in the region, and the ways in which the United States can more effectively support host governments.

I'll ask each of the speakers to limit their comments to eight to ten minutes so that we then have time for questions and answers with the audience. So thank you very much for joining us today, and without any further ado, I'll turn the floor over to the Ambassador from Lebanon.

MR. CHEDID: Thank you. Thank you, Megan for this introduction. First, let me thank the Brookings Institute and the Mercy Corp for organizing this important conference. It is, indeed, an honor to share this stage with remarkable people, colleague, and officials, and thinkers, as we are doing today.

The theme of our conference today is so self-explanatory by itself. No End in Sight: Syria's Refugees and Regional Repercussions. My talk this morning is a very painful shout on behalf of Lebanon and the Lebanese to be heard in this international capital of Washington, and by the international community. It is, indeed, a shout of pain.

The refugee's numbers, the statistics, the amount of the valuable assistance doesn't matter that much anymore to us in Lebanon. What really matter is that the actual Syrian refugee crisis became, obviously, an existentialist problem for Lebanon.

What matters really, ladies and gentleman, is how to stop this hemorrhage? How to come to Lebanon's need to help her coping with the huge impact of the Syrian's refugees problem is important, of course, but over and above to improvise new, realistic solutions to solve the Syrian refugee problem is Lebanon is the most important issue to us. We need solutions.

Day by day the negative impact of the Syrian crisis in Lebanon increases. The latest figures demonstrate that there are not 928,000 Syrian refugees in this tiny Lebanon. They are just more awaiting registration with UNSCR.

It is worth noting that one morning the UNSCR had 763,000 refugees, only that same afternoon of that same day the number had changed to 769,000 as it increase by 6,000 during one single day. This massive increase does not relate the whole story. If we add illegal refugees and those who are not registered the number climbs to 1.3 million which is around 30 percent of the Lebanese population. Equivalent to having 25 million refugees entering Germany in one year or 93.5 billion refugees entering the U.S. in the same period. They have increased Lebanon's population by a third.

The impact of the country so far is deep and dangerous and threatens to unravel the country economically, politically, and socially. The World Bank's Impact Assessment estimates the total economic loss to the country to be around 7.5 billion dollars for the period extending from 2012 to 2014. Unemployment is likely to reach 20 percent as 324,000 Lebanese plunge to unemployment. Exports have planted the 20 percent growth rate in 2010 -- 20 percent has turned into a minus 1 decline in 2012. Tourism tells the same story with the increase of 20 percent in October 2010 also turned into disastrous 80 percent decline.

In addition, the Syrian presence is causing severe stress on the local communities as competition for resources increases. The Syrians are now present in over 1,650 localities in Lebanon, and their presence is causing increased tension. This has led to additional hostility towards the Syrians and has increased, unfortunately racist sentiments towards them.

Ladies and gentleman, despite all that, Lebanon has remained faithful to its international and human commitment, not to close its border in the face of anyone seeking refuge from violence. Again, I repeat that this aggravated burden represents now a real existentialist crisis in view of the security and socioeconomic repercussions of such a sudden overpopulation.

Aside from the direct assistance coming into the refugees through the United Nations High Commission of Refugees, and the specialized civil and international organizations, our state's budget is now in need of an exceptional financial shoring up process to cover these expenses.

I would like here to thank the American administration for its valuable assistance; the American assistance is the highest single one offered by any country as it reach 340 million dollars so far. The Lebanese need the care and support of brotherly and friendly countries in order to face the negative repercussions of this external conflict, which is not of their own making, but which threaten their security and stability, and prejudice their socioeconomic situation.

Not only do they look up to that assistance out of brotherly and friendly solidarity, but also based on the common responsibility thrust upon the international community as a whole regarding the problems which pose a threat to regional and global security in general.

As you know, ladies and gentleman, Lebanon, my country is a tiny country within a delicate geographical area. We are the size of Connecticut state here in the States. The delicate geographical area, the least we can say, with limited recourses and capabilities and sensitive balances within the country.

As it is not possible to impose on nations or individuals, the impossible, and what we are able to do or not to do, it is important to me to reiterate from this very podium my call to increase the efforts to ease this escalating burden, mainly asked around the following points.

One, to provide sufficient funds, human and financial resources, in order to put frames and degradations about the presence of the incoming Syrian refugees. Two, to consolidate frameworks and spaces to allow Syrian refugees on Syrian territories, to log them on Syrian territories in safe zones, of course, outside the reach of the ongoing conflict knowing that the area of Syria is -- the periphery of Syria is 18 times that of Lebanon.

Three, to agree on holding an international conference on the issue of Syrian refuges which does not merely call for financial assistance, but rather begins to search for ways to share the burdens, and numbers, among states based on common responsibility and in light of historical precedence.

To provide support for all the concerned and capable states -- from all the concerned and capable states for the works of the international support group for Lebanon, which has placed the issue of the refugees at the top of its priority. This ISG group will convene in Paris on March 5th, and I am confident that it will be attended by the highest American ranks.

However, in view of the escalation, of the continuing escalation of the

fighting, and additional deterioration of the situation in Syria, an additional number, unfortunately, of families is expected to free adding more to the suffering of those present, and on the hosting communities. That would definitely stretch the capacities of our concerns to its upmost limits.

It is important to note that the displaced families are hosted in Lebanon in communities. We don't have camps. Those are structurally disadvantaged and undeveloped and suffer extreme poverty. The coming of the displaced Syrian families aggravated the misery and the suffering of both Syrian and Lebanese. That is why efforts for assistance should be seen along these lines.

The influx of displaced Syrian families, which was thought, at first, to be of short stay reflected on the Lebanese social fabric. Hosting families are getting tired, as you can expect, with scarce resources. The labor market has been badly affected, especially that the Syrians have been historically cheaper labor force. Since competition has driven to unemployment among members of hosting families in addition to a sharp increase in prices and of commodities.

Moreover, services in these regions are overstretched, reaching the level of total paralysis in some areas. This increasing tension is alarming and creates a feeling of insecurity.

International agencies and NGOs have been swift in responding to the immediate needs. Unfortunately assistance remains unequal like the (inaudible) would tell you, and fragmented in absence of an overall framework for action. A remarkable effort is done and delivered of the UN Agencies to elicit such mechanics.

Sensitive efforts have been concentrating mainly on assisting the Syrian displaced and touch peripherally on the Lebanese hosting communities. It needs to be

addressed. This fact is reflected in the increase of tension between the two communities at different levels.

Ladies and gentleman, as you know Lebanon has a new government, a fresh new government which was formed a week ago, who is committed to support within its capacity the displaced Syrian families awaiting to return to their homes. That goes along in acknowledging the right of the Lebanese hosting communities for adequate social services. However, these capacities have reach deadlock, and immediate help is needed with the escalation of violence, and the massive influx of displaced is expected and require extensive resources.

If these are not made available then the government of Lebanon is forced to ask for a different approach in dealing with the displaced. All these measures seem pressing and urgent pending the desired political solution for Syria. Which we hope will be provided by the Geneva ii Conference, which Lebanon attended its inaugural session along with 40 other countries, a solution that will likely and hopefully ensure for these refugees a dignified and safe return to their country.

But, as you all know, unfortunately so far only bad news came out of this Geneva Conference which will prolong the suffering of the Syrian people and the neighboring countries.

Let me conclude by emphasizing a fact which is the most dangerous repercussion of the Syrian crisis in the area. By assisting the neighboring countries of Syria to cope with the refugees problem, the international community will enhance the security and the stability of these countries.

The spillover of the Syrian situation to these countries, Lebanon included, of course, is capable to destabilize the region of stability; thus creating a

conducive environment for terrorism and terrorist organizations. As we in Lebanon are witnessing the terrorist acts almost daily, almost daily as you can read in the newspapers.

This issue of terrorism should be addressed not only by Lebanon or Iraq or the other neighboring countries, but by the international community; thus enhancing to seriously help reaching a political solution to the Syrian tragedy. Thank you.

MS. BRADLEY: Thank you very much, Ambassador Chedid, especially for, I think your very timely and important call for approaches to the crisis that respond not only to the needs of the Syrian refugees, but also to the dire needs in the host communities.

I'll not turn the floor over to the Ambassador from Iraq.

MR. FAILY: Good morning everybody. Thank you very much, Megan. Thank you for Brookings Institution and Mercury Corp for providing such an opportunity for such an important topic. We usually talk about the security issues in the Middle East, but we rarely talk about the humanitarian aspect of it, so this opportunity is very much appreciated.

If you look at the aftermath of the daily issues on Syria one of the least talked about issues is the tremendous impact or the adverse impact of Syria on its neighbors. More so about the refugee element. Unfortunately that issue has not been addressed nor root causes have been identification to address it, nor the Geneva ii, nor others have provided enough opportunity to address.

Your title which talks about, No End in Sight is a clear statement that the day after scenario has not been articulated yet. Unfortunately we have to talk about that today.

From the Iraqi perspective the Syrian refugee have added to the internal

displacement which you talked about in Iraq. However, I can say that it has had a somewhat, in comparison to our neighbors, a better or more successful story for reasons I will talk about in a minute.

The numbers of refugees in Iraq in comparison to our neighbors are less and proportion to the population, 20:20, which is, I mean, not far from the number Lebanon, but bear in the mind the population of Iraq versus Lebanon which does highlight how significant an impact it has had on Lebanon.

From Iraq the numbers are about 220, primarily in the Kurdish region. After 220, 5,000 only are in the Al Obeidy, which is in the Anbar Province. The rest are all in the Kurdish region. 98 percent of the refugees are Kurds which has a positive sign in the sense that people who accept them in the region are of the same ethnicity and of the same background and have a sort of similar understanding of the issues.

In Iraq ourselves we suffered from internal displacement, the Kurdish population historically had an issue, so they have a good understanding of that. They have provided a better environment for them. Only about 30 percent of those 20,000 are in refugee camps, 70 percent are in urban areas in houses, accommodations and so on, and schools and others which meant that life is much more bearable for them. Provisions, you know, for electricity, healthcare, and so on, sanitation and so on. It's been much more manageable for us.

As a government we haven't had an issue of finance and providing funds for it, so in that sense we have been more than capable and working closely with NGOs and others to try to address the financial element of that. We have not required international funds, as much as we -- it's more to do with organizations and coordination within the Iraqi entities and with NGOs and UNSCR. So in that sense it's more been an

operational challenge than an issue of fund.

The refugee camps, nine of them are in the Erbil Region. So in a way it made it much more flexible for us to address the issues based on the regional issues and regionalities. The camps overall have a good infrastructure, so we're -- I mean, an even electricity supply and so on, so that has been good news.

The other aspect of it is that only 20 NGOs have been involved. If you look at the Turkish examples there are about 150 NGOs which creates its own problems for coordinating for them -- I mean, by the nature of an NGO that means they're not part of the government institutions and working closely with the government might create its own problems.

However, in the Iraqi scenario only 20 within confided region with a consistency of the ethnicity and the background meant that it's much more manageable for us to work with. However, our concern is not the actual dealing with the refugees as to how long this will be? What is the day after scenario? How could we cater for the mental welfare of the refugees? You can always deal with it in a crisis management point of view, but you can't have prolonged crisis. That creates its own dynamics and problems.

So in that sense we have -- I hope that our Q&A talks about that more than the actual numbers is what can we do to make life easier for them, and provide more or less closer tab rather than keep getting refugee because of their crisis continuing in Syria.

Main aid has been provided by the internal Kurdish Development and Modification Center and with working with the UNSCR. Which meant that managing it has become much more, sort of not easier, but doable. That's one of the key issues as

well.

The central government has provided funds and capabilities and so on, but we have been more or less been not leading it, but working closely with the local authorities. As anybody who's worked with the refugees when it comes to the local authorities if they have enough capabilities it becomes much easier than external parties or central government.

That's one of the good stories here that we have provided enough funds, capabilities, local authorities do not feel that it's a threat from migration, and they have a good understanding of that. The Kurds in that region have a good understanding of what's taking place in Syria as well, so they have been accommodating.

Reason for that is, as I said, the funds hasn't been the -- the influx of refugees in Iraq in comparison to others from the Syria scenario has been less in comparison to a population or even in comparison to the geography of where they came from. Which meant it became more manageable. And the local authorities dealing with it, that's the other key issue.

The key challenges have been getting better coordination between the NGOs and the locals, and central government, and international and so on. So the coordination has been one of the key challenges we're working on.

The other aspect of it is, as I talked about the long-term key challenge, is the mental welfare of the refugees. That's unfortunately an issue for any refugee anywhere let alone a Syrian refugee with no end in sight to the situation in Syria. So that means you can only provide so much, so that's an issue to address.

The third concern has been on security. Ambassador Chedid talked about the terrorism element unfortunately for us in Iraq, he said nearly daily, with us it's a

daily issue of terrorism. It's primarily been driven by Al-Qaeda. It's not a sectarian war. It's more to do with the terrorists against the state of law, against the rule of law, against the government, against constitutional entities of Iraq. That has been the key challenge.

The key concern we have with Syria has been on the aftermath -- or sorry the spillover into Iraq security. It's not from a refugee; it's not to do with the political entity.

The key question which we need to look at here today as well is how could we assist in resolving the Geneva ii or any other formula so that we don't prolong the sufferings of the refugees. Because within the very near future these refugees will want to have a permanent solution whether it's in Iraq or Lebanon or whether they want to go overseas or whether they will use other tools or methods to force a resolution to their issues. That's an issue of refugees.

The region has enough refugees which cannot accommodate more, sort of, internal displacement or others. The region has enough tension which should not accommodate more tensions as well. So we need to look at the longer view rather than just addressing the immediate issues of the refugees from Iraq perspective.

From our neighbors we highly appreciate the tensions (inaudible), in Georgia and Lebanon, and also bearing in mind the limitation of the capabilities because of the actually prolonged issue of the refugees in Lebanon, for example. Where you have a region in which the polarization's taking place so you have to address the core issues there as well. So we can see that unless we have a collective view or resolving it, unless we resign to certain facts on the ground I'm afraid this prolongness will not have an end soon.

I think we need to somewhat mature up to the situation and deal with the

crisis and identify it as a crisis rather than just as a refugee issue. Thank you.

MS. BRADLEY: Thank you very much, Ambassador. In particular, for drawing our attention to this difficulty of planning and thinking about the long-term in a crisis. It is still changing every day on the ground.

I'll now turn the floor over to Dina.

MS. SABBAH: Thank you, Megan. Thank you all for being here today. I am here today as a representative of global humanitarian organization Mercy Corps, but I'm also here today as a Jordanian citizen living this crisis day in and day out.

Before I get into facts and figures I just want to share with you a story that touched my heart at the beginning of the crisis. We were distributing hearing aid the refugee camp, and one of the men with hearing impairment he was refusing to take a hearing aid. So after asking him about why you don't want one. So he shared with us his story while coming to Jordan from Syria.

He was sitting in a taxi with two people sitting next to him in the rear seat. All of the sudden the guy next to him started shaking. So he thought, is he crazy? He's shaking and dancing in the way. Then he felt something warm underneath him. When he put his hand it was blood. He looked at the guy and he was taking all the bullets. It was an ambush. He was dead and taking all the bullets.

So he said, I don't want to take it. I don't want to take the hearing aid. I'd rather live in my own peaceful world. This story made me cry for days and I couldn't sleep. It gave me more power to do the work that I'm doing currently on the ground. For years Jordan has been a stable state in an unstable neighborhood. This made it became a magnet for refugees. Over half of our population is of Palestinian origin. Many Iraqis now call Jordan their home.

In the recent years with a civil war in Syria a vast, new population arrived to town. As Megan said, we have more than 600,000 Syrians with refugee status in Jordan. This accounts for, as you said, it's more like 10 percent of the population. There are other Syrians who are living in Jordan too without the refugee status. The total number is estimated to reach around 1.4 million.

The impact on the Jordanian resources has been profound. Jordan pre-crisis population was only 6 million, so just imagine the amount of refugees in this country. Some cities, now they have more Syrians than Jordanians. In Drumtha City, right across the border from Syria there were only 50,000 Jordanians living in that city. Today we have 150,000 people living in the city.

This sudden influx would be difficult for even wealth countries, just like the USA, for a small country with limited resources like Jordan it would be crippling. Our hospitals are overwhelmed, our schools are overcrowded, even garbage in the streets is piling up, our sewage systems are being overrun.

But the challenge is really apparent in the water sector. Let me tell you how scarcity of water is like in Jordan. We only receive water once a week and to store that we store it in tanks on our roof buildings. It was really a nice change for me to look from the window in D.C. and not seeing the tanks. It was something unusual.

We store the water in the tanks and use it for a while week. So towards the end of the week we become more rationale in using what's left of the water. Sometimes we are not lucky to get the water each week at the same time. In some areas water doesn't arrive for a few weeks.

So in addition to that problem and making things worse, we have a very week water infrastructure. Out of the water that has been pumped out, treated, and

pumped to users again, the loss through the aging network accounts for 45 percent to 70 percent that is water loss in the network.

With the onset of the Syrian crisis the water sector problems have accelerated. The government of Jordan estimates the standard of 100 liter per person per day as a consumption. After the crisis this has tremendously dropped. In some areas it's more like 30 liters, and let me show you what 30 looks like.

The water container, the usual one we have everywhere. This is a 20 liter, so it's a little bit more than that what we get. That goes for everything: drinking water, cooking, sanitation, washing, and basic life needs.

Jordanian consumes less than 20 percent of what an average American consumes per day. Our pipelines can run dry for weeks. Our water supply companies they don't have the resources to fix up the network, so the complaints they have received have tripled during the last three years. They used to receive complaints of no water, 12,000 per year. Now it's getting up to 45,000. The number can go higher, but the utility company receives, like, 10 bucks for each complaint. So that's what's making things somehow stand on the triple.

Not surprisingly with all these scarce resources and all these problems tension began to arise between Jordanians and Syrians. Such as in Lebanon as his Excellency mentioned, Syrians, and for water in particular, Syrians come from a water wealthy country, unlike Jordanians, and have different behavioral patterns in dealing with water.

Let me give you a small example. We use buckets to clean, to serve water, and to clean everything from windows to cars, and this is the normal. Syrians use the water hose and such a scene between Jordanian and Syrian begin to click the

tension because we don't have enough resources to drink.

Since 2006 Mercy Corps has been addressing the issue of scarcity of water. With the major support from donors, including USAID, we expanded our programs dramatically to support host community post the crisis. Our projects operate across a wide range of activities, from drilling wells at the refugee camps, to building the capacity of local partners to address communal water needs.

Our projects have four components. We begin with building the infrastructure. We have, as I said before, we have a very week, worn out infrastructure, so upgrades are needed urgently. With the support from USAID and the Complex Crisis Fund, UNICEF, and UNHCR we are working to improve the aging network. These projects include reservoir renovation, new pipelines, and renovating pump stations.

We are also working with our local partners, the community based organizations. With the support from USAID we have invested in building the capacity of local CBOs through our revolving loan programs. We trained them on accounting, project management, and then provide start-up cash to fuel loans for water saving improvements.

Then we work on shaping the attitudes and that also goes for working with CBOs. We are helping them to start campaigns of raising awareness to improve the program outreach, expand awareness, and educate Jordanian as well as Syrian students on water management.

We pair that with the infrastructure of rainwater harvesting system, and this is to add another source, non-traditional source as the water supply that they get from the network to schools. Because the number of Syrian students are outnumbering the Jordanian students currently which made the Minister of Education use a two-shift

system. The first shift for Jordanians and the second shift for Syrians.

Fourth, we work on mitigating the conflict. Through training Jordanian and Syrian community leaders in negotiations skills and conflict mitigation in addressing the issues emerging in their communities. That will help building up the sense of togetherness on how to address the scarcity of issues emerging in their communities, and what kind of solutions they might come up with.

Of course, these solutions are also being funded to be implemented on the ground. Such as rainwater harvesting systems, building playgrounds for kids, having parks for people at the areas. Because of the success that we witnessed in the first phase of this project we are expanding now to key host communities.

The title of this session today is: There is No End in Sight. So how do we move forward? The refugees are huge and they need international support, but we also need to invest in the long-term needs of Jordan, specifically infrastructure, demand reduction, and building the community resilience.

In this unstable region we want Jordan to remain stable. The stability of the country is at a risk. With the continued support of the U.S. and international community, and focusing on the long-term challenges facing Jordan we can start to address these challenges. We are thankful for the support of the Congressmen, the U.S. government, the U.S. people for all what they provided us so far to help us face these challenges. Thus the needs are still great and the challenges are even greater. Thank you for giving me this opportunity.

MS. BRADLEY: Thank you very much, Dina, for sharing this very powerful perspective from the field, and giving us some really concrete examples, I think, of how to respond to the issue that Ambassador Chedid raised of how can we respond to

the refugee crisis in a way that provides concrete benefit to the host communities as well. So, thank you. Kemal.

MR. KIRISCI: Thanks, Megan. Excellences, panelists, colleagues, and participants here, when one looks at the Syrian refugee crisis I personally feel that it's so difficult to find the words which with to capture the state in which they are. We here at Brookings are running a Syrian displacement crisis project that took us to the border region on Turkey with Syria.

My little antidote is an encounter with a former judge in Syria walking down the streets. Fairly green streets, clean street of the town of Rahunga, just a few miles from the Syrian border. As we chatted along he turned around and he said, when we got started in an effort to reform Syria we never thought that a calamity was going to hit us. From that very moment when I heard that word not a day goes by reminding myself that what we're facing is really a calamity.

Each time I look on the news reporting from Syria and see the destruction of the urban centers, and I think this is what makes the Syrian crisis so different than some of these similar crises elsewhere around the world is the physical destruction that reminds me of the end of the second World War, and the state in which some of the European cities were left at the end of that war.

So I think today's focus on the future and the long run is a critical, critical one. The way I approach it is that refuges, at least as far as they go in Turkey, I hope this is not the case for Lebanon and Jordan and Iraq Ambassadors, is that they are there to stay. Just about two weeks ago I was in Turkey and got to interview a series of members of Parliament as well as officials, and attended a seminar focusing on this issue.

I was struck the way in which there was a common denominator to all of what they were saying is that the Turkish government set out and opened its border and established refugee camps that the New York Times Sunday Supplement last week referred to as how to build a perfect camp. They did build perfect camps. I've seen it. I don't want to sound like a government spokesman there, but they deserve the credit for the way in which they are housing now about 210,000 refugees in these camps.

In that article there was a striking quotation from someone staying in those camps referring to the camp as a five-star prison. More and more Syrian refugees in these camps, and arriving to Turkey, increasingly are preferring to be outside those camps, five-star camps, where air condition, TV, means to use, a supermarket there for cooking purpose, laundries are all provided for and the streets are licking clean, but they want to get out.

Outside refugee camp it's estimated that there are about 700,000 refugees all in Turkey with half a million of them outside. The numbers keep increasing. The government is expecting that by the end of this year that the numbers may even go up to 1 1/2 percent. But outside camps life is tough. Many challenges are faced, from children forced into work, into exploitation, women having difficulties in their own sort of surroundings.

Access is provided for national health services, but there are challenges are far as education goes. According to the most recent regional response plan overview, more than 70 percent of the children who are outside camps in Turkey are not receiving any education. Our Ambassador from Jordan has already made references to what the consequences of a generation that is not receiving proper education could be.

In all fairness, international governmental agencies and NGOs together

with the Turkish Ministry of Education and other governmental agencies are trying to address this issue, but the impact remains a very limited one. The question of education is also accompanied with labor issues.

The current laws in Turkey do not allow for easy access to work permits for Syrians. More and more Syrians are working in the black market. They work for pittances, and in no doubt get also exploited. But there is another side to the medallion, as was the case mentioned in Lebanon and in Jordan too.

Wages are collapsing, rent is increasing. Although the government remains extremely hospitable to the refugees. Again, a good proportion of the population along the border of Syria have been very receptive towards, and very generous towards the refugees. At the same time, resentment is also increasing.

A poll that was taken by a reputable small think-tank in Istanbul discovered that 86 percent of those they polled want no more refugees in Turkey, and a third of those want the refugees that are in Turkey to be sent back. Yet repatriation is not an option, and it doesn't look like it's going to be an option in the near future as references have been made to the little achievements that have come out from the Geneva ii process.

What frankly strikes me is that the Geneva ii process has not even started to address the issue of the return of the refugees. I hope I am utterly wrong, but my sense is that if a political solution emerges from the Geneva ii process where in one way or the other the regime, or elements of the regime stays behind in power, I am quite convinced that the likelihood of Syrian refugees, at least the ones in Turkey, returning or being able to return is going to be highly unlikely.

So what are the options that Turkey faces? There are two options left, or

combination of two, one is resettlement, and so far the resettlement option has not been particularly forthcoming and generous. Megan has a paper that is referring to the challenges there.

Turkey has long been a refugee receiving country, but it has also had the possibility that a large number of countries around the world, including the United States, have accepted resettlement from Turkey of refugees that were recognized by the UNHCR through during the Cold War as well as subsequently.

Yet when we look at the picture today resettlement beyond a few thousand, and the High Commissioner for UNHCR, Antonio Guterres, made an appeal last fall for 10,000 slots for resettlement. We yet have to see the realization of the resettlement possibilities coming out there.

But this is all about burden sharing. It has already been reference. International refugee law sees the refugee problem as an international responsibility. Neighboring countries have taken on this responsibility along the lines that have just been expressed. The international community will have to come forward with a more realistic possibility of resettlement at least for the most vulnerable amongst those refugees in the neighboring countries.

The last option is integration. People remaining in the countries where they are hosted. When we look at the refugee scene, not just in the Middle East, but around the world, most refugees end up staying where they are. The average figure that I red not that long ago is 12 years in camps, and yet there are camps where people have been in for 20, if not more years. I need not refer to the experience of the Palestinians in the very region where the Syrian refugee numbers are increasing.

I would like to conclude by referring to a kind of Shakespearean dilemma

that Turkey is facing right now. Are we, or is Turkey going to adopt realistic policies and take the bull from its horns, in a way, recognize that they are here to stay and begin to adopt the education, the labor related policies that will help the refugees to integrate in Turkey?

Yet it's so much easier said than done. Right now Turkey is abuzz with rumors that this is exactly what the government wants to do, extend citizenship to the refugees and make sure that they vote in the upcoming three sets of elections, assuming that they are going to vote for the government. This is deeply ruffling feathers in Turkey, increasing political tension within the country too.

So where do you stand? How do you proceed? This is one typical example of a dilemma that I suspect hosting governments elsewhere are facing too. But there too, burden sharing is going to be very critical. Burden sharing with respect to education in particular, with respect to -- just to give you a concrete example and then I'll finish it.

Our Minister of Foreign Affairs just about two weeks ago in Geneva declared that there were 8,500 or 8,600 babies born in refugee camps. Yet we don't know the number of refugee babies that have been born outside camps. These baby refugees are they getting registered? To complicate things, there are more and more women or young girls who are adopting the strategy for security purposes of going into households as second wives. This is not recognized in Turkish law. From these relationships are being born babies that bureaucracy is unable to register to take care of.

So in the long run not only we risk having children that are not receiving the education that they deserve, but we are also risking of having babies and children who are stateless who don't have a status.

What's the burden sharing deal or part of it is that the international community begins to raise these issues and finds ways of squeezing it into the Geneva ii process and its agenda while digging deep into their pockets and share the financial burden as well. Thank you.

MS. BRADLEY: Thank you very much, Kemal. As we've explored issues around the Syrian crisis at Brookings it's been such an asset to have you as part of these discussions, so thank you. Kelly.

MS. CLEMENTS: Good morning. Thank you very much. I'm delighted to be here, and what a rich panel. The Ambassadors from Lebanon and Iraq and Dina and Kemal. Thank you very much to Brookings and to Mercy Corps. I want to give special acknowledgement to Beth Ferris, who unfortunately couldn't be here, but she's really been a leader on the IDP displacement issues. Mercy Corps, of course, a very key partner of the United States and others around the world. So thanks very much. Delighted to be here.

So my topic is a very broad one and many of the issues that I'm going to discuss have been touched upon by previous speakers, so this could be a very short intervention or a longer one. But I'm going to talk a little bit about U.S. government policy with regard to addressing the needs of hosts as well as refugees, and I think that's been a theme that's already come out in the comments this morning and one that we in the U.S. government very much share.

So we've talked a little bit about the scope and the scale of this crisis, and both Kemal and Dina had very memorable antidotes of conversations they've had with people in the region. We could spend a long time doing that this morning, but in the interest of time I will not do that.

But it's very important to get beyond the numbers, which are mind-numbing in terms of their magnitude and their scope, and think about each of these 9.3 million people who are affected by this crisis in Syria and in the region as people, as individuals, as people who have gone through an incredible ordeal in terms of this crisis that's been going on now for three years.

So Megan talked a little bit about the numbers in terms of what we're talking about. Inside Syria, obviously, 6.5 million internally displaced persons, 2.5 million refugees in the region. I don't think that the dais here is large enough to have Egypt represented, but let's not forget Egypt in terms of also a very significant hosting country.

In terms of the 2.5 million, 1 million of those being refugees. These are refugees that, and we -- I think they are trying to put a map up on the screen, we've got a couple of handouts for you. We're big fans of maps, and in fact, one of my colleagues from our bureau in the State Department who produces these maps is in the audience today. I'm not sure that you can see that from where you're sitting because this room is so long, but it gives you a really good scope in terms of the regional dimensions of the crisis.

The second handout that you'll see today, if you don't have it coming in, is something that gives you a bit of a picture in terms of how this crisis has quickly escalated over the last three years.

So we know a little bit in terms of -- and speakers have talked about the magnitude of this crisis. We haven't seen numbers like this in the last three decades with the exception of Afghanistan. The rate of the flows of refugees into neighboring countries in terms of how quickly this has happened, we've not seen since Rwanda in the mid-1990s.

Syria's development has decreased 35 years in the course of this crisis and probably decreasing by the day. We've heard a little bit about the impacts, obviously Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Turkey in terms of how this has affected GDPs, what governments have spent in terms of hosting refugees, unemployment rates, struggles in terms of host community to be able to cope.

Each country in the region is affected. This is not just a humanitarian crisis. This is, indeed, a regional crisis of stability, and one that the United States government has at the very top of its agenda.

I want to say on the humanitarian side, this is in the same time that we're dealing with escalating humanitarian crises elsewhere in the world as well. South Sudan, for example, the Central African Republic. So I'm very pleased that we're focusing on this issue today, but we have also not lost sight of what's happening elsewhere in the world.

So one of our main U.S. government priorities in terms of this crisis is not to just deal with it as a humanitarian one, but to look at the development aspects to this, the macroeconomic aspects, and even to look at what we as a government can bring in terms of other support, including military support to this crisis.

Dina and Ambassador Chedid both mentioned the U.S. Congress in thanks and appreciation. I wanted to also echo those thanks because it was because of that support that the United States is the number on donor and funder of development and humanitarian programs in the region. Since this crisis has begun, 1.7 billion dollars we've provided in humanitarian support alone, but I'll tell you a little bit more about the bilateral aid in a moment.

So we have, basically, four U.S. government humanitarian objectives

related to this crisis. I'll go very briefly through them because I think it is important to realize that one cannot divorce what's happening in the region from what's happening inside the country of Syria.

Our first objective is to get as much humanitarian assistance into Syria as we possibly can. Our second objective is to make sure that we've got sufficient humanitarian assistance going to those neighboring countries to keep borders open because it is far easier to protect people in the neighboring countries currently than it is in Syria.

The third is to stabilize the neighborhood and that's what we're spending the lion's share of our discussion this morning talking about. Because of the existential crises Ambassador Chedid mentioned, in terms of having this wave of additional people to support in addition to host government's citizens.

Then the fourth is to meet very important protection needs in and outside of Syria. In this regard I would mention things that have already been discussed, but the impacts of gender based violence, for example, and what this crisis, the impact it is having on children. There have been some very important initiatives in the neighboring countries including the No Lost Generation initiative that we can talk about further in Q&A if you'd like.

The first objective, in terms of getting as much humanitarian aid into Syria as possible, we're doing this through every means available: traditional, non-traditional, international organizations, non-governmental organizations. This is certainly a very high priority.

It's a high insecure environment. The medical facilities and aid workers have been targeted. There has been aid obstruction. You all have been watching the

newspapers closing and looking at events on the ground, and it's just getting worse. Unfortunately the presidential statement that was adopted in October has really not made an impact in terms of our ability to get more aid into Syria.

The second objective, in terms of keeping borders open, I want to pay particular regard not just to Syrians being able to cross those borders, but there are also Palestinians that need assistance. Currently we know that there were 550,000 Palestinian refugees in Syria at the beginning of this crisis. About 80,000 have left Syria. About half of those 550,000 are somehow affected by this crisis and displaced. Nearly all of them somehow have been touched by the war. So this is something of great concern to us.

The borders, you can't detach this protection element from bringing additional assistance to those neighboring countries to be able to cope. Here again, we reference the third objective, which is stabilizing the neighborhood.

So I mentioned this is not a humanitarian crisis alone. It is certainly a broader regional crisis, it certainly threatens regional stability. So what are we doing as U.S. government and an international community?

It's been very important for us, and it's not necessarily very easy to see this actually happen, we're trying to break some new ground. We're not just applying humanitarian tools to meet humanitarian needs. We're not just applying development tools to meet humanitarian needs.

We're really trying to bring all of the spigots of U.S. government support, and I mentioned military earlier too, because what' they're doing in Lebanon and in Jordan in terms of support for the Lebanese armed forces and the Jordanian armed forces is really quick significant.

We have recognized in this crisis, and this has been mentioned by previous speakers, this will be protracted. This is something that increasingly governments that are hosting Syrians and others that are fleeing the violence have recognized. So we need to develop, and we are trying to develop, programs that accommodate this concern.

These aren't quick fixes. We need to be thinking about all aspects. Whether or not that's the economy, development needs, impacts on the host communities in particular.

There are key populations that are seriously as risk. Children and youth in particular, and we're not thinking now just about Syrians that are fleeing Syria, but the impact on those host communities and potentially for citizens to be squeezed out of spots in schools, for example, access to doctors, health workers, and so on. So bringing that kind of assistance is very important.

Previous speakers talked about the dimensions of this crisis. We're not talking necessarily about camps. Three quarters of the refugees are now living in host communities. As Ambassador Chedid mentioned, 1,650 different Lebanese communities host Syrians. UNHCR has quite a striking map that gives you a comparison of what Lebanon looked like about a year ago and what Lebanon looks like about now. Little red dots a year ago, entirely red now in terms of impacts and those community hosting refugees. So this is very much about the host communities.

Now each host has a different reality. We know that in Lebanon there are not camps, in Turkey there are 22 very well-run camps, but again, the lion's share of refugees are outside of camps. We need to be thinking about health, education, infrastructure, employment, all of these various pieces. This is not a traditional

humanitarian response emergency that we are dealing with.

There are definitely increased tensions. Public opinion is changing as Kemal mentioned in Turkey, for example. Very important to recognize, this is not the first refugee flow that these countries have handled in the last couple of decades. Palestinian flow, Iraqi flows. So there are governments that are used to dealing with refugees, but also significantly burdened by it. So we as the international community need to be very much behind them.

In terms of the fourth point, I don't want to neglect the issue of, in terms of burden sharing, resettlement. Now, this is not something that is a solution for a vast majority, but is a very important part of burden sharing. We, the United States, is the largest resettlement country of all other countries combined. We'll be taking significant numbers of Syrians before this crisis is over, there's no doubt.

So what are we doing in the U.S. government in terms of changing the way that we deal with this? There is something that the UN has put together call the Comprehensive Regional Strategy. Now that sounds like a big set of words in terms of what we're trying to achieve, but it's exactly trying to put together responses that are not just humanitarian focused, but include development and economic pieces as well.

They identify needs and vulnerabilities. They identify the capacity of the hosts and the delivery tools that might be brought to bear to address these needs. The identify aid flows through all spigots. So let me give you an example.

In Lebanon, for example, there was a ground-breaking, UN, World Bank, Government of Lebanon assessment that was done in July that both did an assessment and then also proposed responses. It was very much based on what refugees were in host communities, and what we could do to be able to address those needs. It's really

quite something, and it's something that we'll continue to look at in terms of response.

So in Lebanon, we have both humanitarian assistance, and we've also provided significant bilateral aid. We've provided education support, support to health centers, and I mentioned the Lebanese Armed Forces, and 37 humanitarian assistance projects.

We very much welcome the government formation and they will be very much leaders in terms of how we will respond going forward. In Jordan, the President last week talked about its intention to renew the MOU, the Memorandum of Understanding with Jordan. We have brought loan guarantees to the country. We've provided additional budget supports to address refugee impacts. IMF and The World Bank have provided additional support. As Dina has mentioned, there's been significant development support that we've provided.

In Turkey, where I returned just last night from discussions with the government in Ankara, we are looking very much at how we support this exceptional government response, you know, through local authorities and what we can do at the local level to provide additional support, particularly in urban areas. That's something we'll look to going forward.

But our support has been vast, it's been broad, it's gone beyond humanitarian to development and economic. That's something that we will continue. Thanks very much.

MS. BRADLEY: Thank you, Kelly, for this great overview as the U.S. approach to this crisis in the region. Time is short so we'll now open up the floor to a first round of questions. If you could make sure to keep your questions as briefly as possible I'd be grateful. I have some colleagues who'll be coming around with microphones.

The woman in the back.

MS. WILLIAMSON: Hi. Thank you. My name is Sarah Williamson. I'm the Managing Director of Protect the People. My question is for Kelly Clements. You gave us a really comprehensive overview of the needs and the way the U.S. government is trying to address them, but I was wondering if you could speak to the most pressing gaps? Are there missing pieces? There's a lot of money, a lot of action, a lot of response, but what are the key critical gaps in this overall mission?

MS. BRADLEY: Thank you. Any other questions? The gentleman on the right-hand side.

MR. WEINTRAUB: Thank you. I'm Leon Weintraub, University of Wisconsin. I have a question for Ambassador Chedid of Lebanon. You had mentioned the horrible suffering that is taking place in Lebanon. We're all very much aware of that and we empathize with you. But you also mentioned that this is a tragedy not of our own making. Considering what we've heard about the involvement of Hezbollah in Syria and the fact that Hezbollah, in fact, is a significant part of the government in Lebanon, I'm wondering how this is somehow not of the government's own making?

MS. BRADLEY: In the back, the gentleman on the right-hand side.

MR. ABRAZI: My name is Tamal Abrazi. I'm a Syrian journalist. I have a question to Kelly. It puzzles me how the American Government giving aid through the Syrian government, which really use it as a blackmail to surround, you know, a liberated area, like they will not give anybody in the liberated area except after they surrender. So why are you still giving aid through the Syrian government?

MS. BRADLEY: The woman in the back on the right-hand side.

MS. MARSALISI: Laura Marsalisi, U.S. Azeris Network. Why is the

international community not protesting the resettlement of Syrian Armenians into the Nagoro-Karabakh Region? It's an occupied territory, and there's plenty --

MS. BRADLEY: Could you speak up? It's quite hard to hear.

MS. MARSALISI: So my name is Laura Marsalisi and I'm a researcher at U.S. Azeris Network. Why is the international community not protesting the resettlement of Syrian Armenians into the Nagoro-Karabakh Region? It's an occupied territory and as such it's a violation of Article 49 of the Geneva Conference to have, you know, refugees resettled into this territory.

MS. BRADLEY: Thank you very much. I think the last question might be somewhat outside the scope of today's discussion. But in terms of the first three questions I'll start with Kelly and then give the floor to Ambassador Chedid.

MS. CLEMENTS: Thanks. To address Sarah's question first in terms of gaps, wow. There are many. I think probably the issues that we're most concerned right now are about protection, and protection for those that are outside of the camps in the urban areas, and those, for example, that we have not been able to reach in terms of services.

When I say we, the U.S. government works through not only the host countries, but also important international and non-governmental organization. So registration is obviously a key part in trying to access those communities, but in a place like Turkey, for example, although we hear the official registration numbers of something in the neighborhood of 600,000 to 700,000, actually the numbers are much higher. Probably exceeding 1 million people. So in terms of services for those additional 300,000 to 400,000 those are some of the needs that we're trying to reach.

So it's psycho-social support. It's education. It's health. It's the whole

gamut of service delivery, but focused very much on the protection. Protection of vulnerable, protection of women, protection of children, and trying to reach as many as we can as quickly as we can.

The question from the gentleman in terms of support to the Syrian government. We actually don't work through the Syrian government at all in terms of delivering humanitarian assistance. They are provided by reputable, and some of them are here in this room, international and non-governmental organizations.

They have very strong monitoring and evaluation systems. These funds don't go to the Syrian government at all. Obviously it's a government with which they need to cooperated and seek assistance in terms of being able to provide aid, particularly in the harder to reach areas, which has been a big problem.

They have been an obstruction in terms of us being able to provide more assistance to those in need, particularly in the contested and hard to reach areas. Which right now affects about 3.3 million people.

MS. BRADLEY: Thank you. Ambassador.

MR. CHEDID: Yes, of course, when I spoke about the Syrian crisis I meant that it is a Syrian crisis. It is about the Syrian people, of course. It's not of our making. We are suffering from the tragedy. That's what I really meant about it. The Syrian crisis would start its third year, and it had a lot of repercussions here and there.

So that's why it's not fair for Lebanon, for example, to assume all those results and tragedies as it is not, of course, of our making. Thank you.

MS. BRADLEY: Thank you. We'll take another round of questions starting on the left-hand side. The gentleman in the back.

MR. ZARTMAN: William Zartman from SAIS. All this is very moving and

it's about the effects. What are we doing about the cause? We know now, and many of us knew before, that Geneva was a non-starter. As long as the stonewalling of the outside government continues we will be dealing with more and more affects. As the American representative said, protection, but not prevention of continuing refugee flows. What are we doing about the cause?

MS. BRADLEY: Thank you. The woman at the front.

MS. AZADUF: I'm Talle Afaduf from Indiei. I have a question from Mr. Kirisci. I was wondering if this current situation on the border and this flow of Syrian refugees pose any threat of sectarian tensions amongst the, you know, Turkish people and the Syrian people in terms of, like Alawites in Turkey, like to Sunni Syrian refugees. If you can give a little about that? Thank you.

MS. BRADLEY: Thank you. On the right-hand side.

MS. KWAMAFEL: Heluli Kwamafel with Refugees International. I understand, of course, that rightly in terms of proportions the focus is on the Syrian refugees and displaced persons, but I read some reports recently about other refugees in the countries neighboring Syria that feel discriminated and marginalized and ignored because of the increased attention and focus on the Syrian refugees. Like, for example, Sudanese refugees in Jordan. Could you please comment on this?

MS. BRADLEY: Thank you. We'll take one more question. On the left-hand side in the middle.

MS. WORTHINGTON: My name is Megan Worthington and I recently returned from Peace Corps Jordan. Ambassador Chedid, I heard you mention creating safe zones inside of Syria and that's something I've been hearing about more lately. I wonder if any of those safe zones currently exist, and if they do how realistic is it to --

MS. BRADLEY: Could you speak up, please?

MS. WORTHINGTON: I was wondering about safe zones inside of Syria and if that's a realistic solution to refugee flow? If it is, is it happening right now or is it a goal for the near future?

MS. BRADLEY: Thank you. So let's start with Kemal in terms of the question on Turkey.

MR. KIRISCI: It's a tough question to answer. One needs to be familiar with the Turkish population. The parts of Turkey or part of the parts of Turkey that borders Syria is also populated by Turks who are of similar ethnic and religious background as the minority in Syria that supports or partly supports the government in power.

So what this has led to is a couple of outcomes. One outcome is that at the early stages of the crisis when the government set up refugee camps in parts of that region populated by Alawites there was some tension, considerable tension actually. But the government in response removed those camps from those areas and moved them out elsewhere.

I also hear, and this is very difficult to corroborate, as I talk to people in Turkey, including MPs, I hear complaints that these camps, five-star camps, are really overwhelmingly for Syrian Sunni refugees, and that Alawites refugees and Christian refugees feel uncomfortable with the idea of being placed in those camps, and instead prefer to remain outside. And very interestingly, go to towns and cities that are governed at the local level, governed by the opposition party in Turkey that traditionally has had a supportive base from Alawite populations.

It gets a bit complicated because in Turkey we make distinctions

between Alawites and Alevis, but this is the kind of reporting goes. However, my personal judgment and observation is that currently the tension between let's say the Sunnis, the government on the one hand, and these minorities are not at the level they were in the early stages of the conflict or arrival of the Syrian refugees.

Having said that, this doesn't mean that there are no problems in Turkey as far as the relationship that the government has with these minorities in Turkey. However, one of the MPs that I interviewed while I was in Ankara was actually an Alawite from the Hatay region. I, frankly, was quite impressed with the level-headed way in which he was able to analyze the situation and reflect on it.

MS. BRADLEY: Thank you. Ambassador Chedid, we had a question for you on the question of safe zones and whether this is a realistic option. Perhaps Kelly would also like to weigh-in on this question.

MR. CHEDID: What I have to say is I'm stating what we want in Lebanon, what we want to resettle, of course, and to relocate the refugees from Lebanon because of the problems that I explained.

We really think that it should be some safe zones for them should be created within Syria to relocate them in their own countries. That would be good for them, and that would be, of course, good for us.

Easier said than done. I'm not saying that it's easy. It is a complicated issue. It needs maybe a no-fly zone or whatever which is part maybe -- it could be viewed as a military action, but nevertheless we are not the ones that are going to create those zones. What we have to do is stress and to find solutions for the refugees and this is, in our opinion, one of the solutions, and hopefully at one point when a political solution could be reached then such zones could be created within Syria.

MS. BRADLEY: Thank you, Kelly. Also, if you wanted to speak to the question of what's to be done in terms of the causes, and we'll also open this up to Ambassador Faily and Dina as well.

MS. CLEMENTS: The comment from our colleague from SAIS is obviously right on the point. There is no humanitarian solution. There is only a political solution, and that's obviously our number one priority, and why the Administration has been so engaged in trying to make Geneva ii work is to try to bring the parties together, bring full support to Brahimi, and to work with Russia counterparts to make sure that we've got a conversation going to be able to address the prevention aspects to make it possible, we hope, for Syrians to be able to go home in the not too distant future.

Obviously the outlook right now is uncertain, but our commitment to it is not. We're very committed to trying to make sure that this is something that is successful.

That said, we have obviously the humanitarian issues we need to deal with right now and the protracted issues. In terms of -- I'm not going to use the term safe zones because I think the Ambassador mentioned that protection is going to be a key part of whatever other options might be addressed. In our experience it's very difficult to be able to secure and protect these zones. The last thing we would want to have happen is for refugees or displaced Syrians to become targets.

So these are options that have inherent challenges. But that said, we're exploring absolutely every way we can to bring more aid into Syria and to be able to assist people that are in areas that are currently unreachable. So that would be the immediate response on that particular issue.

MS. BRADLEY: Dina, Ambassador, if you had any thoughts on the issues of causes, and also the question that was raised on the predicament of refugees

from other countries in the region.

MS. SABBAH: As a representative of a global humanitarian organization we do not deal with the political causes. We deal with the impact of the political causes. We work directly with the people on the ground in trying to reach as many people, and ease up the suffering of as many refugees as possible. This is basically our stand before the Syrian crisis.

MR. FAILY: What we have been saying in Iraq is please learn from the Iraq experience and not to repeat the mistakes we made, and to look at that experience to see how you can coexist and (inaudible) solutions, yet you may have different backgrounds.

I don't like to indulge more on the causes, but I would like to say that counseling the other, expecting the other not to exist physically is one of the key causes. The various shades of Al-Qaida in Syria have been one of the key causes because it has not allowed for the physical existence of the other. The ethnic cleansings of the type which has created more adverse manifestation in a region in which revenge and tribalism is part of the core culture. So I think that's one of the other causes.

One of the other causes as well is that, I mean, Geneva ii provides a good example of what to start from, and that might not be the ultimate end, but it provides enough framework for us to start the serious dialogue. To do that all stakeholders have to accommodate the other. They have to expect to come to the table with something to give away, and not just to take. That's another important aspect to think about as well.

The problem has been is that people are saying is that this attrition situation which carries on in Syria, people have not really addressed the how to close the taps. For example, the finance, that's purely an overseas issue. It's not an internal

Syrian issue. Legitimizing the violence in Syria. That's another purely overseas issue as well.

Trying to expect that the Syrian situation is a very binary situation, it's just the Shiites and the Alawites, it's not. It's a bit more complicated. You have people who are Christians and Alawites and others siding with a government who perceives us to be anti-Sunni. So you have that issue as well, so you have the polarization taking place as well.

I think the Iraqi example provide a rich, sort of example to understand from. However Syria has its own uniqueness. I think from the U.S. they have, I might add they have been surprised by the complexity of Syria. We in the region have not been. We have always said that this issue would not resolve overnight. It's not an issue of providing weapons or legitimizing a side or not. It's a bit more complicated. Unfortunately the suffering of the people will prolong until we realize that.

MR. KIRISCI: If I may, Geneva ii should really -- the refugee problem in Geneva should be a very important item to be discussed, definitely they are not discussing now the refugees because it will be an outcome rather than a condition. But in the final analysis also, the political solution should address the problem of the refugees for the sake of Syrian refugees themselves, and their safety, and for the sake of the neighboring countries.

So it should be, of course, a priority, and hopefully that Geneva ii will start again and will succeed in order to address this very important problem. Thank you.

MS. BRADLEY: Thank you. I think that that's an excellent note on which to end today's conversation. I'd like to thank the panelists for taking the time to join us today, and for sharing their insights on what is clearly going to be a very long-term

dilemma for the region, for the United States, and so we'll look forward to continuing this discussion. Thank you also to the audience for joining us.

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